

**A STUDY OF YOUNG CHILDREN WHO ARE
WARDS OF THE STATE OF MINNESOTA
As of October 14, 1996**

**By Esther Wattenberg
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**Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare
School of Social Work
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July, 1997

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and the School of Social Work, University of Minnesota

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Introduction

Recent attention to permanent placements for foster children, including an emphasis on adoption* has brought renewed interest in the children who are now wards of the state. This is a study of children, under 6 years of age as of October 14, 1996, who were wards of the state. At that time, there were 1,445 children who were wards of the state. Of these, 215 young children were waiting to be adopted because their parents had their parental rights terminated.

What do we know of these children who were legally "orphaned"? In other words, what transforms a "child" embraced by birth parents into a "ward," a minor under the protection and control of the State? The pathway for this transformation is a series of complex factors woven into regulated procedures. Child protection issues, voluntary relinquishment, and tragic circumstances of children bereft of birth parents through accidents of fate play a role in bringing children into the protective custody of the State. Procedures devised to dissolve the birth-parent-child relationship and to create, in its stead, the status known as a "ward of the state" are both legal and administrative. The pathway to the termination of parental rights (TPR), the indispensable action before a child becomes a "ward," is constructed with a demanding set of procedural steps. These procedures are fraught with cautious deliberations from both the social service and legal systems. This reflects the necessary hesitation to invoke the awesome power of the State, when it is called in to sever the relationship of minor children from their birth parents.

*See "Steps to Increase Adoptions and Alternate Permanent Placement for Waiting Children in the Public Child Welfare System," a Presidential Memorandum directed to the United States Department of Health and Human Services December 14, 1996.

The purpose of this study, which is part of a larger study on all children who were wards of the State of Minnesota between 1991 and 1996, is to understand characteristics of the children, their placements, their parents, and the adoption outcomes. This information is presented in Tables 1 through 4. Table 5 presents information on the time lag between TPR and adoptive placement.

Tables 6, 7, and 8 provide information on the racial background of birth parents, and adoptive backgrounds.

This report of young wards of the state permits us to grasp the challenge ahead in seeking permanency for children who no longer have a legal connection to their birth parents.

Highlights

Characteristics of Children

- Almost half of the children were Caucasian (49.3%), followed by African American (41.9%), Native American (8.4%), and Asian American (0.5%).
- Almost 65% of the children, when parental rights were terminated, were under 3 years of age; 35% of the children were between 3 and 6 years of age.
- Slightly more than half of the children had disabilities, with emotional disturbance as the most prominent disability.
- Almost 90% of children had special needs, i.e., a description that denotes a condition that requires special attention for placement and supervision.
- Almost 60% of the children were born in either Hennepin or Ramsey counties.
- Almost 86% of children had more than one sibling to be placed together. Notably, one half of the children have two siblings, resulting in a group of 3 children to be placed together. One third had three or more sibling, resulting in a group of four or more children needing to be placed together.

Characteristics of Placement

- All the children were placed by court order as wards of the Department of Human Services, and were free for adoption.
- Almost 70% of the children were eligible for Title IV-E during the placement, indicating a poverty status.
- More than 80% of the children had adoption subsidies (Title IV-E 74%; State adoption subsidy 8%).
- The living arrangement for most of the children was foster care (83%), followed by relatives (13%) and others associated with the family (3%).

Characteristics of Parent

- Of these young wards of the state, almost 60% of mothers and fathers of the children were Caucasian, compared to about 30% who were African American; 16% of parents were mixed race (see Table A in Appendix for a comparison of mother's race and father's race).
- Sixty-two percent of mothers of the children who were wards were never-married, single mothers.
- Seventy-one percent of mothers were in their 20's when their parental rights were terminated. Only 2% who were in their teens.

Characteristics of Adoption Placement

- Fifty-eight percent of the children were between 3 and 6 years of age at adoption, and 42% of children were under 3 years of age.
- Almost one-fourth of the adopted children were placed in either Hennepin or Ramsey counties.
- Almost half of the children were adopted by parents who were neither relatives nor foster parents; more than 30% were foster parents, and 20% were grandparents, aunts/uncles, and other relatives.
- More than three-quarters of adoptive parents were Caucasian. Almost 21% of the primary adoptive parents were African American.
- Same race placements were 87%, and in 13% of placements, the child's race was different than that of the adoptive parent (See Table B in Appendix.)

Time Lag Between TPR and Adoptive Placement

- More than 70% of the children were placed in adoption within one year after Termination of Parental Rights (18% within less than one month; 29% within between 1 and 6 months; 26% within between 6 and 12 months).
- Twenty-eight percent of children spent more than one year in foster care after TPR awaiting adoptive placements.
- Twelve percent of children after TPR spent between one and one-half and three years awaiting adoption.

Table 1. Characteristics of Children, Wards of the State, as of October 14, 1996

		Frequency	Percentage
Gender (N=215)	Female	101	47.0
	Male	114	53.0
Race (N=215)	Caucasian	106	49.3
	African American	90	41.9
	Native American	18	8.4
	Asian American	1	0.5
Age at TPR (N=202)	Less than 1 year old	26	12.9
	1 year old	52	25.7
	2 years old	53	26.2
	3 years old	49	24.3
	4 years old	21	10.4
	5 years old	1	0.5
Disability (N=196)	No disability	97	49.5
	Chemical dependency	2	1.0
	Emotional disturbance	32	16.3
	Developmental disability	20	10.2
	Physical disability	12	6.1
	Visual/Speech impairment	13	6.6
	Learning disability	8	4.1
	HIV/AIDS	1	0.5
	Other disabilities	11	5.6
Special needs* (N=212)	No special needs	22	10.4
	Disability	52	24.5
	Sibling group	58	27.4
	Minority	24	11.3
	Older child	9	4.2
	Behavior problem	6	2.8
	Health background	25	11.8
	History of abuse and neglect	14	6.6
	Other special needs	2	0.9
County of birth (N=215)	Hennepin	82	38.1
	Ramsey	46	21.4
	Other counties	87	40.5
Number of sibling to be placed together (N=112)	0	15	13.4
	1	4	3.6
	2	56	50.0
	3	17	15.2
	4	10	8.9
	5	8	7.1
	6	0	0.0
	7	2	1.8

Table 1. Characteristics of Children, Wards of the State

- Slightly more male children (53%) were wards of the state than were female children (47%).
- Almost half of the children were Caucasian (49.3%), followed by African American (41.9%), Native American (8.4%), and Asian American (0.5%).
- Almost 65% of the children, when parental rights were terminated, were under 3 years of age; 35% of the children were between 3 and 6 years of age.
- Slightly more than half of the children had disabilities: emotional disturbance 16.3%; developmental disability 10.2%; visual/speech impairment 6.6%; physical disability 6.1%; learning disability 4.1%; chemical dependency 1.0%; HIV/AIDS 0.5%; other disabilities 5.6%.
- Almost 90% of children had special needs*: sibling group (have more than one sibling to be placed together) 27.4%; disability**24.5%; health background 11.8%; minority*** 11.3%; history of abuse and neglect 6.6%; older child 4.2%; behavioral problem 2.8%; other special needs 0.9%.
- Almost 60% of the children were born in either Hennepin or Ramsey counties.
- Almost 87% of children had more than one sibling to be placed together. Notably, one half of the children have two siblings, resulting in a group of 3 children to be placed together.

* Special needs is a description that denotes a condition that requires special attention for placement and supervision.

**The "disability," under this category, requires special attention in a search for adoptive parents.

*** The racial characteristics of a child requires a special considerations for placement purposes. (Perhaps a bi-racial child is indicated here.)

Table 2. Characteristics of Placement

		Frequency	Percentage
Permanency planning (M=212)	Reunify with relative	4	1.9
	Adoption	205	96.7
	Foster care	3	1.4
Title IV-E status (N=215)	Yes	151	70.2
	No	64	29.8
Subsidy status (N=205)	Title IV-E	151	73.7
	State adoption subsidy	16	7.8
	No adoption subsidy	38	18.5
Living arrangement (N=214)	Residential service	1	0.5
	Foster care	178	83.2
	Family	6	2.8
	With relatives	27	12.6
	Runaway	2	0.9
County of commitment (N=215)	Hennepin	70	32.6
	Ramsey	45	20.9
	Other counties	100	46.5
County where child located (N=215)	Hennepin	66	30.7
	Ramsey	46	21.4
	Other counties	103	47.9

Table 2. Characteristics of Placement

- All the children were placed by court order as wards of the Department of Human Services, and were free for adoption.
- For most of the children (96.7%), the permanency planning goal was adoption.
- Almost 70% of the children were eligible for Title IV-E during the placement, indicating a poverty status.
- More than 80% of the children had adoption subsidies (Title IV-E 74%; State adoption subsidy 8%).
- The living arrangement for most of the children was foster care (83%), followed by relatives (13%) and others associated with the family (3%).
- About half of the children were located in either Hennepin or Ramsey counties, and these counties had responsibility for placement.

Table 3. Characteristics of Parent

		Frequency	Percentage
Mother's race (N=214)	Caucasian	135	63.1
	African American	63	29.4
	Native American	15	7.0
	Asian American	1	0.5
Father's race (N=161)	Caucasian	97	60.2
	African American	54	33.5
	Native American	9	5.6
	Asian American	1	0.6
Mother's marital status (N=187)	Single, never married	116	62.0
	Divorced	32	17.1
	Widow or widower	3	1.6
	Married, living with spouse	18	9.6
	Married, but separated without legal action	14	7.5
	Legally separated	2	1.1
	Married, but involuntarily separated	2	1.1
Mother's age at TPR (N=188)	10 - 19	4	2.1
	20 - 29	134	71.3
	30 - 39	47	25.0
	40 - 49	3	1.6

Table 3. Characteristics of Parent

- More than 60% of mothers and fathers of the children who were wards of the state were Caucasian, compared to about 30% who were African American; 16% of parents were mixed race (see Table A in Appendix for a comparison of mother's race and father's race).
- Sixty-two percent of mothers of the children who were wards were never-married, single mothers.
- Seventy-one percent of mothers were in their 20's when their parental rights were terminated, compared to 25% who were in their 30s, 2% who were in their teens, and 2% who were in their 40s.

Table 4. Characteristics of Adoption Placement

		Frequency	Percentage
Child's age at adoption (N=134)	Less than 1 year old	9	6.7
	1 year old	21	15.7
	2 years old	26	19.4
	3 years old	28	20.9
	4 years old	32	23.9
	5 years old	18	13.4
Mother's age at adoption of child (N=128)	10 - 19	1	0.8
	20 - 29	84	65.6
	30 - 39	40	31.3
	40 - 49	3	2.3
County of reporting (N=215)	Hennepin	38	17.7
	Ramsey	18	8.4
	Other counties	159	74.0
County of supervising (N=215)	Hennepin	35	16.3
	Ramsey	13	6.0
	Other counties	167	77.7
Adoptive parent1* relationship (N=134)	Grandparent	17	12.7
	Aunt/Uncle	7	5.2
	Other relatives	5	3.7
	Foster parents	43	32.1
	Non-relative	62	46.3
Adoptive parent2* relationship (N=103)	Grandparent	6	5.8
	Aunt/Uncle	5	4.9
	Other relatives	2	1.9
	Foster parents	36	35.0
	Non-relative	54	52.4
Adoptive parent1 race (N=134)	Caucasian	101	75.4
	African American	28	20.9
	Native American	4	3.0
	Asian American	1	0.7
Adoptive parent2 race (N=102)	Caucasian	92	90.2
	African American	9	8.8
	Native American	1	1.0
	Asian American	0	0.0
Adoptive parent1 age at adoption (N=130)	20 - 29	8	6.2
	30 - 39	59	45.4
	40 - 49	45	34.6
	50 - 59	16	12.3
	60 - 69	2	1.5
Adoptive parent2 age at adoption (N=95)	20 - 29	5	5.3
	30 - 39	40	42.1
	40 - 49	41	43.2
	50 - 59	9	9.5

* Adoptive parent 1 is the primary caretaker of the child, and adoptive parent 2 is the secondary caretaker of the child.

Tom: The State

DPW denies the
accuracy of the

"rat" quoted —

• Twelvehills, there are

large #'s, relatively,

of children waiting for
adoption. There are

children with severe
disabilities + a high portion
of African-American, older, boys.

2/ There are 2 initiatives
recently taken: privatization
(contracts to non-profits)
And increased availability of

Adoption subsidies —

I reviewed our last
study of young wards
of the state — here

70% were adopted
within 1 year, terminate
of parental rights.

Σ

Adoption Rate Varies Widely, A State-by-State Study Finds

By IRVIN MOLOTSKY

WASHINGTON, Aug. 7 — The number of foster children who are ultimately adopted varies widely from state to state — from 96 percent in North Dakota last year to less than 10 percent in Hawaii, according to a study by two groups that specialize in advocacy on children's issues.

The study was done by the National Center for Policy Analysis, a research organization, and the Institute for Children, a public-policy group devoted to increasing adoption and cutting back on foster care.

The National Center for Policy Analysis also said children in foster homes were far more likely to end up on welfare or in jail later in life than children raised in the more stable atmosphere of an adoptive home.

Statistics for the study were gathered over two years by the Institute for Children. Its president, Conna Craig, said the group surveyed the states after the Federal Government failed to do so. The Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act called on the Government 17 years ago to compile such data.

Michael Kharfen, the spokesman for the Department of Health and Human Services, disputed Ms. Craig's statement.

"The law in 1980 required the states to maintain the information and provide it to the Federal Government, which they did," Mr. Kharfen said. The Government issued a report on the information submitted in 1982, he added.

Since then, he said, states have been voluntarily providing information on the adoption of eligible foster children, although the information is

incomplete. A new law will require another report next year, Mr. Kharfen said.

Among the larger states in the Institute for Children study, California had an adoption rate of almost 35 percent of its eligible children in foster care, Texas nearly 29 percent and Florida almost 44 percent.

The Institute for Children was unable to calculate the adoption rate in New York because the state did not complete the survey form. "This alone tells us something — that New York State could not or would not tell us," Ms. Craig said.

Later today, a spokeswoman for the New York Department of Social Services, Theresa Wescott, provided the figures for 1996, which put the adoption rate in New York State at just above 25 percent of eligible foster children.

Katy Meaker Menges, the spokeswoman for the National Center for Policy Analysis, said there were many reasons for wide variations in adoptions from state to state.

"Some states send children through courts faster," Ms. Menges said, "and some states have more children than others."

She added that states that were privatizing their adoptions were generally increasing the rates at which eligible foster children were adopted.

Both groups involved in the report favor privatization of child care services and maintain that the current system of Federal payments to the states encourages states to keep children in foster homes.

The Federal payments to states for foster care totaled \$3.6 billion last year, said Ms. Craig of the Institute

FOR THE RECORD

Adoption of Foster Children

A new study shows that the percentage of eligible foster children who are ultimately adopted varies widely by state.

Percentage of foster children adopted in 1996, by state:

North Dakota	96.73%	Delaware	39.34%	Kansas	26.97%
Oregon	60.32	Colorado	37.12	Arkansas	26.39
New Mexico	54.30	Indiana	36.62	Georgia	25.55
Utah	53.45	Michigan	36.61	New York	25.21
New Hampshire	51.61	Idaho	36.31	Ohio	25.08
Wyoming	50.00	Nebraska	34.89	Mississippi	24.83
Nevada	48.46	California	34.78	Vermont	22.37
Maryland	47.06	South Carolina	33.98	Maine	20.89
Illinois	46.39	Washington	32.41	Minnesota	20.66
Massachusetts	46.27	Alaska	31.31	West Virginia	19.21
Rhode Island	44.83	Louisiana	30.76	Alabama	18.46
Florida	43.75	Kentucky	30.60	Pennsylvania	15.19
Iowa	43.18	Oklahoma	30.06	Hawaii	9.60
Missouri	42.84	Texas	28.93		
New Jersey	40.07	Virginia	28.43		

Comparable figures not available for Arizona, Connecticut, Montana, North Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Wisconsin or the District of Columbia.

Sources: Institute for Children; National Center for Policy Analysis; New York State Department of Social Services

for Children, adding that "Federal dollars flow in to keep kids in foster care."

Mr. Kharfen, the Health and Human Services spokesman, said that President Clinton had already acted to double the number of adoptions from foster care by the year 2002 and that he had offered incentives to states to increase such adoptions.

Two bills moving through Congress with bipartisan support would reverse the long-held supposition that reunifying foster children with their birth parents was usually the best policy, and instead would make children's safety the paramount con-

cern.

The bills would offer states money for increasing the adoption of children in foster care. The House has already approved such a measure, and Republican leaders in the Senate favor the House bill.

Both of the groups that issued the report say they are politically independent, but the National Center for Policy Analysis adds that its positions favoring privatization and block grants to states tend to draw support from conservatives. "We provide private-sector solutions to public-policy problems," Ms. Menges said.

Arizona Governor People's Errors

worst economic crash since 1929," Mr. Dowd said.

Mr. Symington wiped away a tear as Mr. Dowd recounted how the governor's late mother, a steel heiress, had lent her son hundreds of thousands of dollars to support his struggling business.

Prosecutors charged that Mr. Symington omitted more than \$1 million in loans from family and friends in his financial documents because they would have decreased his net worth. They also questioned Mr. Symington's assertion that Martha Symington had forgiven the loans during a phone conversation, of which he had taken no notes. "What's this country coming to when you have to take notes when you talk to your mother?" Mr. Dowd asked.

time workers is \$9.36 an hour, compared with \$6.01 for part-time workers, a gap that has persisted for years. But Marvin Kosters, director of economic policy studies at the American Enterprise Institute, concluded in a study that when allowances are made for skills and education, the gap essentially disappears.

Similarly, the bureau notes that the number of part-time workers rose to 19.5 percent of the work force in 1994 from 14 percent in 1968. The percentage has since dropped slightly, but Susan Houseman, a labor economist at the Upjohn Institute, argues that such data fail to account for the growing number of Americans who hold two part-time jobs, or a full-time and a part-time job. They appear instead in the official count as full-timers, working a total of more than 35 hours a week.

Ms. Houseman's survey of 550 companies last summer showed a growing use of part-time workers who cost less than full-timers.

"U.S. is by no means an isolated example," she said, "and that makes the strike a platform to debate the broader issues."

to Mr. Clinton, urging him to push harder to end the strike.

White House officials say the President has encouraged the two sides to talk. But Mr. Clinton said at his news

Wednesday, Mr. Clinton said he was ing contract negotiations over police officers' salaries and benefits and said, "If we support the teamsters now they will support us when our any s

WE'D LIKE TO CLEAR UP A FEW THINGS ABOUT TAP WATER



Concerned about chlorine, lead | on water filtrat

Coca-Cola
Concert Series



Jones
beach

The
Beach Boys

special guest
Knockout
Drops



NYNEX

Sat Aug 23

Here's how your family can Look, Listen & Win
tickets and VIP seats to this great concert!

LOOK: Today's song of the day is: "Kokomo" (The Beach Boys)

Table 4. Characteristics of Adoption Placement

- Fifty-eight percent of the children were between 3 and 6 years of age at adoption, and 42% of children were under 3 years of age.
- Almost 66% of biological mothers were in their 20's when their children were adopted, compared to 31% in their 30s, 2% in their 40s, and less than 1% in their teens.
- More than one-fourth of the adopted children were placed in either Hennepin or Ramsey counties.
- Almost half of the children were adopted by parents who were neither relatives nor foster parents; more than 30% were foster parents, and 20% were grandparents, aunts/uncles, and other relatives.
- More than three-quarters of adoptive parents were Caucasian. Twenty-one percent of the primary adoptive parents were African American. Same race placements were 87%, and in 13% of placements, the child's race was different than that of the adoptive parent (See Table B in Appendix.)
- More than 40% of adoptive parents were in their 30s, and almost 40% were in their 40s.

Table 5. Time Lag Between TPR and Adoptive Placement (134 Children)

Time Lag*	Frequency	Percentages
0 - 30 days	23	17.7
31 - 180 days	37	28.5
181 - 364 days	34	26.2
1 - 1 1/2 years	20	15.4
1 1/2 - 2 years	9	6.9
2 years	4	3.1
3 years	3	2.3

* Mean: 261 days; Median: 219 days; Minimum: 0 days; Maximum: 1463 days.

Table 5. Time Lag Between TPR and Adoptive Placement

- More than 70% of the children were placed in adoption within one year after Termination of Parental Rights (18% within less than one month; 29% within between 1 and 6 months; 26% within between 6 and 12 months).
- Twenty-eight percent of children spent more than one year in foster care after TPR awaiting adoptive placements.
- Twelve percent of children after TPR spent between one and one-half and three years awaiting adoption.

Conclusion

The findings from this study are somewhat reassuring. Although a significant number of children waiting for adoption are young, they have multiple special needs. Nevertheless, more than 70 percent of the children were placed in adoptive homes within one year after termination of parental rights. This speaks well for Minnesota's energetic search and placement efforts. However, 28 percent of the children remained in care for up to three years. Concentrated attention to these children is in order.

Common knowledge in the field of adoption, confirmed by studies, indicates that young children have the greatest potential for moving into adoptive homes quickly. However, an assumption that young children can be placed effortlessly is not warranted. Ninety percent of Minnesota's young wards, at the time of this report, had special needs that would have to be considered in adoption plans. More than half of the children were noted to be suffering from an emotional disturbance. Moreover, more than half of the children belonged to family groups in which three children or more needed to be placed together.

These are formidable challenges for the guiding principle in adoption, "the best interests of the child." Both the scope and intensity of the search for adoptive parents that will provide stability and an optimistic environment in which children can thrive will require resources and continued support for a post-adoption period.

Appendix

Table A. Mother's Race Compared to Father's Race (N=161)

Mother\Father	Caucasian	African American	Native American	Asian American
Caucasian	94 (82.5%)	16 (14.0%)	4 (3.5%)	
African American	1 (2.8%)	35 (97.2%)		
Native American	2 (20.0%)	3 (30.0%)	5 (50.0%)	
Asian American				1 (100.0%)

* Same-racial couple: 135 (83.9%); Mixed race couple: 26 (16.1%).

Table B. Child's Race Compared to Adoptive Parent1's Race (N=134)

Child\Adoptive Parent1	Caucasian	African American	Native American	Asian American
Caucasian	86 (97.9%)		1 (1.1%)	1 (1.1%)
African American	12 (30.0%)	28 (70.0%)		
Native American	3 (50.0%)		3 (50.0%)	
Asian American				

* Same-racial placement: 117 (87.3%); Different-racial placement: 17 (12.7%).

Table C. Adoptive Parent1's Race Compared to Adoptive Parent2's Race (N=102)

Parent1\Parent2	Caucasian	African American	Native American	Asian American
Caucasian	87 (96.7%)	3 (3.3%)		
African American	3 (33.3%)	6 (66.7%)		
Native American	2 (66.7%)		1 (33.3%)	
Asian American				

* Same-racial couple: 94 (92.2%); Mixed race couple: 8 (7.8%).

Figure 1. Age of the Children as of 10/14/96 (N=202)

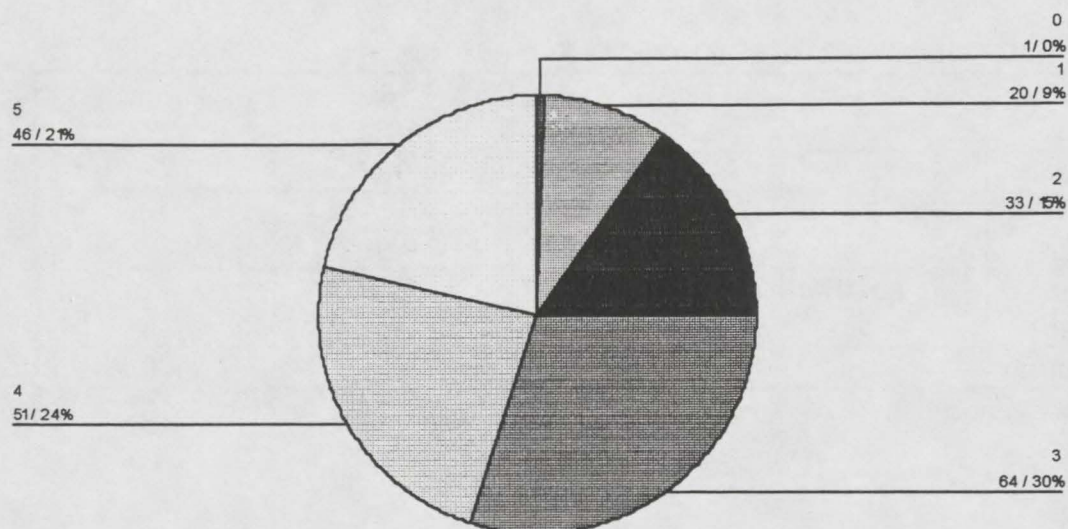


Figure 2. Race of the Children (N=215)

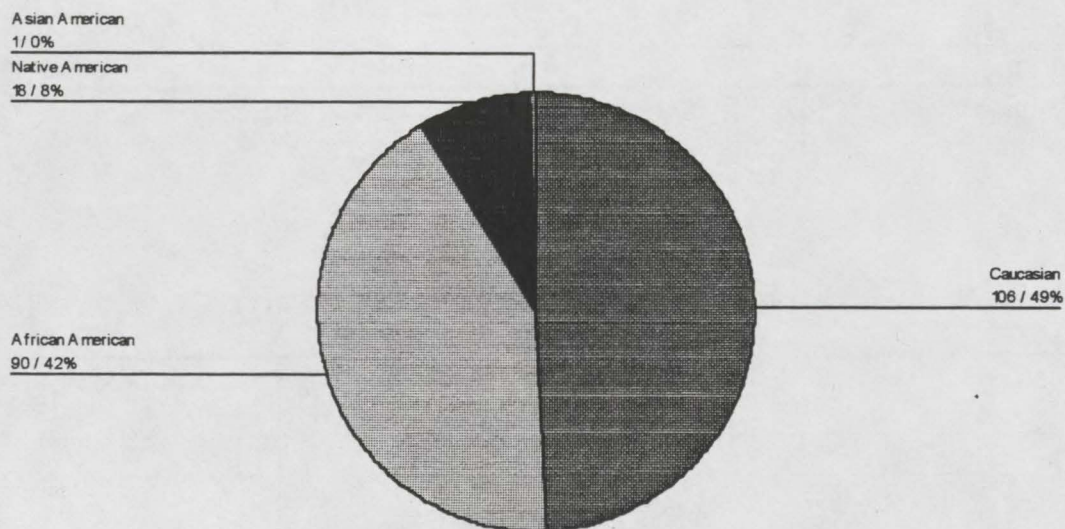


Figure 3. Time Lag Between TPR and Adoptive Placement (134 Children)

